

K. Brennan
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A
PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

ON THE
MORAL AND POLITICAL

STATE

OF
IRELAND:

IN A LETTER TO
EARL FITZWILLIAM,

THIRD EDITION.

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MY LORD,

YOU are come to take upon you the government of IRELAND.—It has with truth been said, there is no such island, were the hand of man to combine with the hand of nature. You are successor to the large estate, to the respectable talents, and to that even temperature, or genial climate of mind, possessed by your maternal uncle. Were it possible for that greatly good character ever to be erased from your memory, you will find it detailed on marble, with a good deal of literary labour, in the library of Lord Charlemont. You come, at a time when general society is in much

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internal agitation, and compliment is therefore due to your magnanimity in the acceptance of a high but precarious station: for, though, at a distance, this island may appear equable, smooth, and shining; like the silent satelite, obsequious in its course, and regular in its circumvolution; yet a nearer view will discover its multiform changes, its unequal motions, its librations, and its asperities.

You come, the successor of a Viceroy, whose name may serve as a date in the margin of Irish history, but will never once be noticed in its page. Public, without being known; little heard of, though often seen; he sat at the council-board a listless automaton, or galloped through the city, the terror of old women, and the envy of school-boys. When made Master of the Horse, he has fulfilled his destiny, and arrived at that point of animal perfection, for which alone nature and education had designed him. Yet, my Lord, you will perhaps experience with one or two of your predecessors, that the best qualifications for a continuance in the Lieutenancy of Ireland, are those of a negative kind. A soft sponginess of character that will easily acquire any hue, or any stain; a tabula rasa of intellect; a spirit invulnerable to insult; that (for example) after vain endeavours to disunite and discourage the Catholics of Ireland, could condescend to
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truck and chaffer, for the official transmission of their address; and then submit to be passed by with a contemptuous neglect, equally degrading to the honour of the man, and the dignity of the station:—such are the qualities best suited to complete the lustrum of an Irish Lord Lieutenantancy.

The Marquis of Buckingham can inform you how dangerous it is for a Viceroy to be his own minister. Baited by his enemies, and devoted to destruction even by his friends, from the moment he turned his attention to æconomic reform; which, to those in office, was immediate, and to those who hoped to be in office, eventual ruin; after having been drawn through the streets of the capital by human cattle, he was hunted and halloed out of the country, with a full cry of execration. That nobleman's abilities were of such a microscopic kind, he was so prodigiously great in little things, that his activity only served to raise a nest of hornets round his head, to multiply their petty vexations into the effect of public grievances, and to make private pique operate as powerfully against him as any national oppression. I see, therefore, a general improbability in any very able or active man remaining long in the government of Ireland: *unless* by striking out a new line of conduct equally honourable to himself and useful to the country: *unless*, my

Lord, he *popularises* himself more than has hitherto been thought necessary: *unless* he throws his mind out of the Castle into the country; and, by this political naturalization, gets the people to operate as a party on his side, and gains that attachment to his person, which may be gradually transferred to his station.

Now, my Lord, in order to become speedily popular, let me beseech you, in the first and foremost place, to begin your administration where others have terminated, by directing your sincere and early attention to the EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND. Not by mocking the nation with such an ostentatious scaffolding as was raised by the inefficient Orde, without, I believe, a single idea of laying even the first stone in the building; but with honest and resolute intentions; beginning early in order *to have time* to perfect, some practicable plan which may domesticate, at least, the elements of education, and make science stoop to enter the poor man's door. The people, my Lord, are daily becoming more sensible of their physical power. As speedily, therefore, as possible, let that general knowledge be communicated to them, which is proper for all men in the social order; as well as that particular knowledge which is relative to the condition every individual may hold in society; and which
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binding them to that condition by selfish and domestic ties, may prevent them from roaming at large in the savagery of nature. Nature is prone to enter, like the famishing Orlando to the table set out in the forest of Arden. Orlando—"Forbear, and eat no more." Jaques. "Why I have eaten none yet." Orlando. "Nor shalt not, 'till necessity be served. I almost die for food, and let me have it." He speaks at first with the stern commandment of nature, and gradually relaxes into the smooth civility of educated life.

Perhaps the most pernicious error that ever poisoned the happiness of mankind, has been the prejudice, that there is one sort of knowledge fit for the learned, and another adapted to the vulgar.

This double doctrine, less noticed in these days, because really more general, supports itself now exactly as it did of old, on the supposed incapacity of the multitude, and their utter incapability of enjoying practically, what they call the speculative and ideal rights of man. It supports itself by vilifying and abusing the human race with systematic scurrility, as a swinish multitude, a beggary of no value or estimation, thus widening the chasm in society, instead of hastening to fill it up and smooth it over. It supports itself by raising a cloud round that part of human knowledge

ledge called government, with the magic of metaphysics ; and then tinging the edges of this cloud with the prismatic colours of rhetoric, so as to make it dazzle without enlightening, and serve all the purposes of a mystery or a craft.

The separation that now takes place in society, is not that of a college of priests, or a sect of philosophers on the one part, and the general mass on the other, but the professors of the double doctrine, now include, as I think, the whole propertied community, while the remaining multitude are supposed equally incapable of exercising the theoretical rights of their nature, as if they had lived two thousand years ago, on the banks of the Ganges or the Nile. Add to this, that the unhappy circumstances of the times, have destroyed all gradations of opinion ; the isthmus of neutrality has been worn away by the contending waves on the opposite sides ; and the anarchy of interests has resolved into two distinct casts that stand lowering at each other, like two adverse armies. Aristocracy of all kinds, political and religious, hastens to coalesce with monarchy, not for its sake, but for their own ; and with very few exceptions, the whole propertied community make common cause, and range on the same side. In other words, all that can, *in any way*, appropriate to themselves the term Gentleman, are distinguished on the one hand ; and on the other, are

are those who are often called, and always thought to be, Black-Guards.

Whoever ventures to talk with the populace, is looked upon as holding correspondence with the enemy, and to keep any communication with the vulgar, may very properly be said to make a man lose his cast, or in more modern phrase, to put him into Coventry. Whoever contemplates, with philanthropic feelings, this exasperation that has taken place, and is every day increasing in the very bosom of civil society, must shudder at the consequences, and must perceive, that the terrible event is avertible only by introducing and diffusing the simple in opposition to the double doctrine, viz. that truth is one and the same for all men, that the multitude are not to be led by useful and ingenious falsehood, but to be trained up from infancy to maturity in the knowledge of truth, the practice of virtue, and the communication of happiness.

My Lord, the well-being of the lower orders of the people, which is the stamen of every state, can never take place while the ignorance of the people affords both a reason and an excuse for deceiving them. There should be a knowledge common to the philosopher and to the vulgar; not obscured by mystery, or entangled by terms of art, and that should be the knowledge of the rights, and the duties of mankind: here the
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sovereignty of common sense should be the judge in last appeal. The native intelligence of the mind is sufficient for comprehending the most essential truths. Blest are the men, whose profession is not to practice on and preserve the credulity of the multitude; but who, conscious that the vices or virtues of the people spring from the errors of legislatures in fostering public ignorance, endeavour, in spite of calumny and persecution, to enlighten the mass of mankind. Thy name, FRANKLIN! is far more illustrious, by having enlightened what are called the vulgar, than by having drawn fire from Heaven.

My Lord, it may appear a paradox, but I do assert, that the gentlemen reformers, have been themselves accessory to the turbulence of the times. They have stood afar off from the people, in a sort of pharisaical stiffness; and by doing so, have abandoned them too much to that instinct, which seeks redress the shortest way, and which knows to reform only by revolution. I wish some may not have gone farther and deeper. I wish they may not have quietly waited for consequences; and when these were not likely to occur, have united to calumniate the intentions, and blast the characters of honest enthusiastic men, who had incautiously cast themselves among the populace, and were prompt to become the defenders of those, who from want of education, could not
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Speak for themselves. If there were many, or any of this description, who have thus instigated the suspicion and penalty of the laws upon men to their own knowledge purely intentioned, I pray that such may obtain that pardon from the mercy of God, which they would find it difficult to experience from his justice.

But my object, at present, was only to call the immediate attention of your Excellency, to such plans of public education, as may gradually give a new turn to the national character and habits, and as it were, mix your own well informed mind with the mass of the Irish community. I mean not an education by *statute*, such as that exhalation of Orde's, in which "the general superintending power of government was to enforce the full execution of every trust in every department," in which "the children were to be *indispensibly* brought up in the established religion," and the instructors *indispensibly* of the established religion; in which, in short, our common alma mater was turned into a hireling nurse, and the rewards of genius into a job. This was, my Lord, a relique of a mode of government, equally tyrannical and pusillanimous, which wished to sacrifice two of the religious persuasions in Ireland, for the aggrandizement of the third; but the benevolence of genius, such as I am willing to believe your Excellency possesses,

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esses, would rather aim at making these very varieties the source of national improvement, and by a sort of divine process, convert into a common benefit, what has been deemed the origin of national evil. What a gigantic stride has been taken by the natural and unassisted intellect of man, since that awkward Fop, (whose existence is now known *only* as a pensioner on the Irish establishment) wanted to turn the Republic of Letters into a parcel of corporations; thus terminating his administration, by an attempt to swathe and shackle the infant literature of the country, after having tried to swindle away its commerce and its constitution!

My principles are so radically opposite to his, that I think government ought to have as little as *possible* to do with the management of education; and I think also, that education will always wear more or less the air and have the nature of a *craft*, until it be taken more out of the hands of the Clergy. What might have been necessary at those times, when all learning was centered in the clerical order, when they were the *literati*, as co-relative to laymen, operates in the present stage of affairs, as an abuse rather than a benefit. However useful that order may have been to the interests of literature, by preserving in their libraries the reliques of antiquity, as well as to the interests of agriculture, by making the precincts
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of their convents, spots of industrious cultivation, it would, I think, be equally absurd at this day, to restrict the instruction of youth to the clerical order, as it would be to confine the free press by the imprimatur of an university; or to study agriculture from the models laid up in the repository of the Dublin Society. Universities were, what boroughs *once* were, useful corporations; and peculiar privileges were at these times, in both cases, the reward and incitement either of literary or mercantile industry; but both have outlived the purposes of their institution; both are equally inimical to innovation; the one, from having been the cradle of liberty, is likely to become its grave; and from the want of occasional reform in the other, education has become much too monastic and conventual for immediate application to the bosoms of men, and the business of human life.

Under your auspices, my Lord, let a spirit of literary competition, and salutary emulation, be called forth, and supported among the different religious persuasions. A Presbyterian College in the North, a Catholic one in the South, under the regimen most agreeable to their distinct modes of education, would give a spring to literary industry, at present absorbed in one corpulent university, swollen with fat, and much inclined to somnolency. I think there cannot be

one *uniform* plan of national education in Ireland, differing as it does in the descriptions of men who inhabit it; and Orde shewed a radical ignorance of the country, in supposing that any *single* plan could adapt itself to such marked discriminations. The present university, under its statutes and internal regulations never can become *national*. No measure could be so truly politic, popular, and liberal in its spirit, as an encouragement to distinct seminaries of learning. Let the seed of learning always be *scattered* in the sowing. Whether it be Church of England, Catholic or Presbyterian, the land will be blest by its growth and fructification. Encourage, my Lord, the intelligent laymen of each persuasion, to lay before you a statement of their wants in this momentous article of education, and solicit from them the plans best adapted to their different persuasions. A moderate parliamentary grant ought to be left at your own disposal, to help on the manufacture of mind throughout this kingdom; to encourage, but not to endow.

Let an emulation of this kind be kindled in every town throughout the country. In Ireland, means have always been wanting to make great passions, and great passions are, I think, necessary to make great, or even good men. The military enthusiasm spread by the volunteers, (an institution which has curiously affected, the fortunes of
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men, elevating some to the first eminence, who called it *above* law, and subjecting others to punishment, when it was found convenient to declare it *contrary* to law) the military ardour which this institution inspired, advanced the civilization of Ireland more in five years than in half a century before, and that merely by connecting the public interest with a kind of personal ambition. There was a necessity at that time for great men in Ireland, and great men sprung out of that necessity. To make such necessity as it were habitual, to give a happy turn to the virtues, the indolent virtues of individuals, by inspiring them with a love of their country, ought to be your aim, if you mean to govern Ireland, not merely for your own comparatively petty emolument. It is in your power to make the high term—COUNTRY—agitate the minds, and interest the hearts of the men of Ireland. My Lord, as you must be sensible of this truth, that no one endeavours to serve a state of which he is not a member, nor applies his powers and abilities to the service and glory of a nation which as it were external to *him*, you ought to act on all occasions as if animated with the wish of giving to every Irishman—a country. A thousand intellectual and moral blessings will flow from that single word. This alone, well commented upon, would EDUCATE Ireland; and without the efficacy of this word,

word, the island will continue to alternate from the torpor of indolence to the tumult of disaffection.

And here, let me reprobate an institution which I must have always called inhuman, but which is at present particularly impolitic—the Charter Schools of Ireland. I beseech your Excellency, in a spirit of proud indignation, to draw your pen across that part of the speech intended to be read to parliament, which so vulgarly reiterates the recommendation of an institution highly illiberal, contrary to the spirit of the times, and the bare mentioning of which must be so ungracious, if not insulting to the plurality of the people, whose affections you would do well to cultivate.

Our eyes and ears by custom grow callous to what our heads and hearts condemn. The remembrance of civil war is still perpetuated from year to year, by the puerility of a flower or a ribbon; and we see hatred, and unforgiveness, commemorated and sanctioned, with the parade of a procession, or what in this case, may be called the savage sociality of a public dinner. We are accustomed to see without surprise, the streets carefully guarded with military when the chief magistrate communicates with parliament, and the temple of legislature, like that of justice, *too often* profaned by the sword and the bayonet: a relique of those barbarous times, which it would well
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become your Excellency, in every instance, to obliterate from our remembrance. We are accustomed to hear with the same callous indifference, the stale sessional recommendation of a system, the *principle* of which has, by the late laws, been abandoned; which, in its *practice*, turns the government of the country into a kidnapper of the people; and raises in our cabins a civil war between the instinct of nature and the sentiments of religion. But I trust, that your newer sensibility may feel the cruelty of thus sanctioning the seduction of 2000 children; and the absurdity of propagating any faith, by such insidious persecution, as that which makes the unhappy parent sacrifice for the immediate sustenance and accommodation of his child, what his religion has taught him, and what he firmly believes to be, the ground of its future and eternal salvation.

My Lord, I do request you will take the trouble of reading the account of this inveterately illiberal institution in any common Almanack, and every line will, I think, carry its own reprobation to an ingenuous mind. "The children," as it is regulated in this unnatural system, "are all placed in schools *remote* from their former abodes; or in other words, they are torn from all the sweet associations that attend the interesting idea of home. This is indeed a charity which thrives
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on the extinction of all other charities of life; and the feelings of nature must be eradicated, before they can become nurselings of the state. They are banished from their vicinage to a remote quarter of the kingdom, where all traces and ties of kindred are lost and cut off; all habitudes of the heart smothered in the cradle; and when sent into the world, they know not the spot which gave them birth, the mother that bore them, nor the blood which flows in their veins. I think of the speech of Logan, the Indian chief, when all his kindred were murdered by the English: "There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature." It is a cold, a cheerless, and forlorn feeling of this nature, which must freeze the young blood, and placing the mind in a state of sullen insulation, makes its reaction upon society rather dangerous than beneficial. The ties of kindred operate as a sort of external conscience upon the conduct of men, deterring them from the commission of great crimes, for fear of the disgrace which would be reflected upon their relatives. There is a family pride, a domestic honour, among the very poorest and lowest of the community, that guards, and sanctions, and is a sort of God for the little household. Even the highest have such workings of nature, and Lady Macbeth exclaims—"Had he not resembled my *father* when he slept, I had done't."

done't." The imagined countenance of her father was the only conscience left, and came between her and murder. But charter-school policy makes a sort of massacre of all those domestic moralities which operate upon character and conduct, without being able, in the present state of Ireland, to put a higher and nobler principle of action in their place; and thus, I fear, this same policy has bred up many victims for the laws, while they only thought of making proselytes to a religion.

Those schools were professedly founded for the purpose of conversion; but in this, as indeed in most other public institutions, the zeal of the first founders, whether good or evil, is necessarily lost. A religious party gets parliamentary grants, and private vanity leaves endowments, but indifference succeeds, and idleness and self-interest occupy the mansion. 'Acribus initiis, sine incurioso.' Were even the DIOCESAN SCHOOLS *not* to be a mere humbug upon humanity; were they *not* to exact the highest price from those sent to them, and to pocket the rich endowments, but to educate, as required, a certain number of children gratuitously, still I do not see much benefit that would accrue to the public. It is a mendicancy of learning that degrades and demeans the very spirits, which learning should raise, enoble, and refine. The truth

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is, that the perfection of education must arise, principally, from the efforts of individuals. Individuals are always improving. Establishments are always decaying. Individuals are always in a state of progressive melioration, from the instinct of nature. Public institutions are always in a state of retrocession from their original principles, and their sole activity is to conceal the knowledge of *this*, from the broad eye of the public. Hundreds of thousands have been expended, merely to create foundlings, the tenth of which might have impartially diffused among all religious persuasions, the elements of that universal education, the cultivation of which must of *itself*, assimilate all religions into the only true one—the love of God and our *neighbours*, whether in Canada, in Chili, or at the next door. Universal education would tend to bring about a mutual *conversion*; and that interchange and reciprocity of mind, which an increase of *knowledge* among all the people must create, would lead to a *marriage* between the two great divisions of christianity, equally advantageous to the virtue and happiness of civil society: not such a marriage as that to which the grave committee of fifteen gives its five pound fortune, and its exclusive benediction. For man is, *but* what he knoweth, says Bacon, and it is knowledge alone,

alone, which can create great power, real virtue, or true religion.

It would be easy to expatiate on minor articles in a plan of national information, such as giving premiums to parents who have shewn most zeal and capacity in educating their children—condensing the elements of science, of politics, and of morals into a catechetical form, and diffusing small books throughout the country, that might make great folios ashamed of their pompous inanity—securing a decided preference to the most meritorious students, of whatever rank or religion—establishing either parochial or county libraries—endowing a professor's chair in every province, for giving lectures gratuitously, on the single subject—Ireland—its history, natural, philosophical, and political—its present state—its possible improvements.—I might enter with ostentatious detail into these particulars, but I know and feel that any thing of this kind would be ineffectual, until Ireland be made a *country*, and the *same* country to all its inhabitants. Now, my Lord, how is this to be done? why, plainly by giving them all a tenure in the constitution. A REFORM IN THE COMMONS HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT is therefore an article of absolute and indispensable necessity, in the NATIONAL EDUCATION of Ireland,—the SECOND topic to which I solicit your attention.

It is too true.—There never can be any national morality; or what is the same thing, there never can be so much individual probity, as to influence and regulate national character, while a *borough* morality pervades the whole country, and perpetuates its idleness, its poverty, and its corruption.

I think, my Lord, that a man who accepts the government of Ireland, ought first to hold a long cabinet conference with his sovereign—CONSCIENCE,—and carefully examine, whether he be prepared to countenance and sanction such a system of public immorality and mental abasement. A good man must deliberate long before he undertook a station of such awful responsibility, not merely to King and Country, but to the future tranquillity of his own mind. The minds of statesmen must now move in a wider orbit than the closet, or the anti-chamber; a prudent man would therefore hesitate, before he undertook an office so eventful, and at the same time so precarious; so exceedingly precarious, that I firmly believe it was merely the fortune of war, which brought him and his party into that station, and the fortune of *the* war, may, in one day, turn both him and them out again. They come in, to serve a purpose; they may be turned out, unawares, to serve another. The taking of a post abroad, may quickly be followed with a removal
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from many posts at home ; and the settlement or displacement of an Irish Attorney or Solicitor General, may depend on the obstinacy or caprice of a Dutch burgomaster.

Such transient sips of the sweets of office, may soothe the senses without injuring the personal dignity of merely professional men ; *they* can rise from the *mess*, at which they had just sat down after long and sweet premeditation, and yield their seats to those who were writhing in the agony of unsatisfied appetite ; but, it becomes the proud independence of *your* private station, if you be, as I think you are, not sure whether this same night, your Lieutenancy may not be required of you, if your stay depends on the quick or slow vibration of the political pendulum ; it becomes you, to crowd and condense as much into this ephemeral existence as possible ; and not to lose a day or an hour in pushing forward the reform of parliament, and the consequent redemption of the people.

I will not disgrace your Excellency and myself, in supposing, for one instant, that you have made any compromise with your political principles ; or that you are not, in perfect consistency,—*at the same time*, a member of the society for constitutional information, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland ;—and indeed no other motive than a desire of performing your superior duty, in the
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former character, could, I suppose, have induced you to accept of the *latter*: in which station, if you do not co-operate with the popular wish for reform, you must, in my mind, become accessory to the many vices and crimes, which the want of that reform has necessarily occasioned.

The crime, as well as misery, of our civil society in Ireland, are clearly traceable to the corruptions of our political constitution—for, it appears to me a truth, that the full and free enjoyment of our rights, is absolutely necessary to the performance of our duties; and the unequal distribution of the former, preventing the accomplishment of the latter, the freedom of the public must be necessarily connected with their *virtue*, as well as their happiness. The manners of the people of England, however odious the term may now appear to their ears, are very republican; but here they are formed on the model of a provincial government; and from the great inequality in the condition of the different orders of men, the morals are affected by the manners; and nothing has, therefore, a chance of reforming either, but a purer legislation.

An arbitrary, irregular, and undetermined subordination, such as your Excellency will see in this country, not only checks and destroys industry, but is really a permanent provocation, on the one part, to every excess which is natural to the *abuse*
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of power, so inseparable from its *use*; and, on the other part, instigates to those crimes, which the hopelessness of redress begets in ferocious and savage natures.

In order, therefore, to smoothe the ruggedness of society in Ireland: to make as it were, even and regular roads for law to move into the interior without shock or succussion, I do firmly believe, that the first and only step necessary, is to *arm* the people with their rights, which is, at the same time, the very first step in giving them knowledge. To know their rights, they must *possess* them; and until they possess them, it appears to me manifestly impossible they can know or perform their duties. The exclusion from the free enjoyment of the one, which first made, will support and prolong, not merely the want of inclination, but the absolute incapacity of discharging the other. What are rights? Nothing more than moral powers of acting or doing what is conformable to our duties; and if the power be restrained or extinguished, so will soon be the inclination. For how much more, therefore, than he supposes, has the proud oppressor to answer for? For how much immediate misery, for how much accessorial criminality—God never prescribes a duty without the means of fulfilling it. But here, the performance is exacted, and the power withheld.

O PEOPLE!

O PEOPLE!—treated always in the extreme, as majesty, or as mob!—Worshipped in the abstract with solemn mockery, abused in the detail with wanton scurrility!—Thou common toast and tool of pensioners and patriots!—Like the earth on which you tread, decried as dirt, though the great pabulum of luxury and enjoyment! Let me never outrage your wretchedness by base allusion, and contumelious comparison; and by the low estimation set upon you, sink you still lower in that self-estimation, which is the spring of good character; and by vilifying and scandalizing your character, make you gloomily acquiesce in the calumny, and thus drive you to abandonment and despair.

No, I would make you think well of yourself; I would raise your hope; I would rouse your ambition; I would shake off your national *ennui*, and develop the germs of genius, of virtue, and of public glory. There is not a tenant of the meanest hovel, in whom I do not recognize the capability and sovereignty of his nature, through all its degradation; and the veriest wretch over whom I stumble in the streets, I deplore as the remote, but well connected consequence, of an abused political constitution. No, the idea of the people always affects me, as if I stood on the border of the ocean. The vast expanse fills and occupies my whole mind. I see the

the multitudinous waves; I hear the distant roar of the rising waters; and I look up to that serene and governing light, which regulates the mighty motion, and preserves the salubrity of the mass, by its very agitations. My Lord, let it be your object, at this fateful crisis, to arbitrate and mediate between the two classes of society, to avert their rude and revolutionary collision, by prevailing on "the proprietary influence," to make a restitution of the common right; and by holding out at the same time, the torch of instruction to the poor, to raise them to a proper elevation, and guide them in the just medium, between their rights and their duties.

Let me turn over the map of mind in this country. There is certainly a leaven of dissatisfaction not confined to particular persuasions, but common to the mass of the lower people, (low I call them, as I call the base of the pyramid low) which may and ought to be considered as a bad national habit, induced, solely, by the peculiar circumstances in which they find themselves placed; but is occasionally brought forward into notice, I much fear, for sinister purposes, when it is found either personally or *politically* expedient, for some of her children to draw caricatures of their mother country, to libel their own vicinage, and to represent the land (in which they are not slow in purchasing estates, and, perhaps, by this

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very manœuvre are assisted in the purchase) as peopled with untameable savages. They are called idle by *nature*, though it is a fact, that crowds migrate once a year to England, in search for that labour abroad, the demand for which is not sufficient at home; thus at once refuting the calumny, by absolute voyaging for purchasers of that labour, which is the only equivalent they have to give for the necessaries of life; and at the same time proclaiming the origin of the evil to rest in the public policy, not in the nature of the people; proclaiming this, perhaps, at the gates of those very absentees who absorb all the abundance of Irish product; and to whom they fly from the proctor, the middleman, and the *driver of the Irish estate*, the whipper in of the tenantry, for that employment in another country, which they find to be so ill rewarded and so depreciated in their own.

The want of a ready and regular market for labour; the want of distribution rather than product; for the vallies may laugh and sing amidst the groans of the people; the want of a variety instead of a single manufacture; and what is of as much consequence, the proper *diffusion*, so as to prove a general, as well as permanent, stimulus and excitement to agricultural industry; the consequent want of much additional employment to various classes in the community; the want of a
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free scope for the diversity of talents and dispositions, by which provident Nature has discriminated Irishmen as well as the rest of her children, but which now lie buried in the grave of their bosoms; the want of such men as your Excellency, to return, like the dew of Heaven, some of that abundance upon the land, which their constant suction must wither and exhaust*; the want of that political importance in the country, which would induce or necessitate the residence of absentees; the want of a proper system for supporting the clergy, in the place of one which operates as a progressive and indefinite tax upon industry, brings odium and ridicule on the whole clerical order, degrades and pollutes by such mean and selfish occupations as their master indignantly drove out of the Temple, those hands which ought to be raised in blessings and humble aspirations, and turns the very instruments of salvation into scourges of the community; the want of an equal countenance and encouragement to industrious and ingenious merit in all religious persuasions: itself arising from the want of that humane, comprehensive, and philosophical spirit, which aims at uniting men, in the joint bands of

* The *only Woollen Hall* in Ireland has been lately built in the County of Wicklow, at an expence of more than 3000l. by Lord Fitzwilliam.

science and public spirit, without regard to sect or party, about one national object, alike interesting to all: such as that of a more equal representation. (And this is indeed a good arising even from the hitherto vain pursuit of that great object, that the very *pursuit* associates, assimilates, and nationalizes.)

Such are *some* of the wants of Ireland, to which I now add the primary want—the *want of a free expression of the general will* (and, in consequence, the want of a well regulated government, a clear determination and limitation of public functions, and a rigorous responsibility in their execution) which would, as I think, prove the grand specific for all the other maladies of the country, chronic as well as acute; would sweeten our manners, improve our morals, give means of employment; and all this, by raising the lower orders of the people, to what may be called the happy temperature between flame and frigidity; that *point* of respectability, which would develop their powers, and increase their enjoyments.

At present, it would not be surprising, that with so many wants, ramifying from the centre to the extremities, the multitude must experience either that stupefaction of soul, which forgets its good principles, or that restless uneasiness which excites bad passions; and yet, I do firmly believe, that every trait of their character and conduct,
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has been designedly pictured with monstrous and malignant exaggeration. Before the last repeal of the penal laws, I was often seriously asked, whether I did not dread the rising of the Papists, and their coming up to massacre all the Protestant inhabitants of the city; and as I seriously answered, that in my poor opinion, there was not the least ground for such apprehension. I observe, in like manner, that the country begins to be calumniated, as usual, before the meeting of parliament, and the Defenders are now made a new name for the same topic of terror as before. The state of the counties begin to be advertised, and the character of the inhabitants exposed in the pillory of the press. Associations are formed, rewards offered, compliments paid, and military assistance solicited. These rewards serve to breed up the blood-hounds of information; irresistibly impel the poor to hunt after their own kind, and give private pique a wished-for means of vengeance.

With such bounties to barbarism, how can a country grow civilized? with suspicions cast around, among those of higher degree, how can such a vicinage prosper? I speak from uncontradicted published testimony, that the Protestant gentry have darkly and suspiciously held off from the Catholic, in their anxious wish to inquire into the cause of, and the remedy for these

these banditti; to know who connive, and who instigate. I refer much of these disorders, which certainly in some degree exist, to that villainy which always takes the advantage and pretext of such dissensions; and in a still greater degree, to an instinctive desire for *arms*, from the very alarming circumstances of the times. In times when the rich are grasping their gold, the poor wish to have iron.

I do not think there has been any such connexion, as was artfully held out to have existed between the higher and lower orders, by those Lords, who, haunted with the ghost of the Secret Committee, (so called, I suppose, from the secrecy of its discoveries) were impelled to give histories of Defenderism, its rise, its progress, its various forms and objects; asserting that they had been supplied with money; which circumstance would come out *in a short time*; and that infamous *miscreants* of France had paid *wretches* in this city to execute their designs. All this was cruel and ignoble calumny for the *uses* of the day; and had any the least connexion of this kind existed, the ferret-eyed and hearted country gentlemen would have fastened upon it, and carried it in triumph to the Castle.

God forgive me if I be mistaken! But I do not believe that there is a race of animals more noxious to the peace and *good-nature* of the country, than

than the *cast* of *political* country gentlemen. I speak only of the *cast* in general, and there are certainly valuable and rare exceptions. Awkward and arrogant; contumelious in their address, and full of the consequence of their claret; with traces of education long since forgotten, and therefore affectedly despised; they live at their country residence, the haughty arbiters of the fate and fortune of a humiliated vassalage, who make interest in the kitchen or the hall, as their landlords do in their turn, in the levee or the anti-chamber.

They come up to the city, and there present a ludicrous mixture of stiffness and twining; with real cunning, and apparent openness; the ruddiness of the cheek gaining credit for the rectitude of the heart; blustering at private parties, and often cringing at court for revenue places, to fill up a ragged rent-roll, and the deficiency of domestic prodigality. These are the men who come up, or are sent up by the hereditary aristocracy, and go from shop to shop in the morning, and from party to party in the afternoon, libelling the country from whence they came, and the tenantry who have made their veins turgid with nourishment; and are heard asking each other, as if by previous agreement, "Is all quiet with you?" in order to give ground-work for
some

some story that may raise a boxing match into a battle, and a riot into a rebellion.

These are the men who advertise their country, as they would do a bad servant, and expose it to the ridicule and abhorrence of all Europe; too often I fear to further private emolument, or fall in with and flatter the peer of the vicinage, or the prejudice of the day.

My Lord—My Lord! I am much afraid there are too many men of *all parties* in all parts of this country, who dread its becoming *major*, and equal to self-management. Yes, I say to *you*, the ascendancy of the land! You DARE not educate the people; you are afraid to look an intelligent public in the face; their insignificance is your importance; their baseness sets you in relief; and you dread these cyphers acquiring a value that may sink your own.

My Lord, you certainly arrive at a most critical period; and possessed as you are, of benevolence, and prudence, and moderation, you will here find an ample field for them all.

Now, I think, is the very time for a comprehensive embracing system, that will not encourage suspicions of any body of men in this country, nor encourage the men who cast around such suspicions. Now is the time to *read* Ireland with your own eyes, to compare text and context, and perform the duty of an enlarged and liberal commentator

tator. Your office lies in one word—CONCILIATION. The spirit of the last administration, was a spirit of fretfulness and irritation, that fretted and irritated all around it, instead of soothing and appeasing. It was a peevish, petulant, acrimonious system. It seemed neither to have head nor heart, but merely a *liver*, so hotly bitter was it in its nature, so splendidly bilious. Away with its petty flanders, its exasperating policy, its embittered *personal* rather than public prosecutions, and let the spirit of amnesty take place of it: let your administration be formed on a grand scale; let it take in, as it were, a wider orbit of mind; let its great object be to abolish parties, and to make a people. In the present state of repulsion and suspicion between parties and individuals, one may safely believe every party to be better than it is reported to be; and every individual better than we have heard him to be. Blest is the morality that thinks there is a virtue even in things accounted most venomous, and wishes to extract it.

I cannot, however, help saying with confidence, and the most thorough conviction, that the object of the last administration was to cherish and nurture religious and political animosities; to raise up the ghost of buried prejudices; to *generate* parties, rather than annihilate them; and to divide an *uniting* people. It was a PARTY IT-

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SELF,

SELF, struggling to maintain its ascendancy and dominancy, by breaking down the people into dust, or by playing one portion of them against another. It was voluntary in its vengeance, and its kindness was compulsory; it was sanguinary from its nature, and its liberality was not its own. When forced to adopt one large portion of the people much against the grain, it gratified its spleen by shifting persecution on the other; and in this, it was allowed its free course, from what, I firmly believe, was originally an imposition upon the royal mind, necessarily at a distance, and the effects of which (truly dangerous); it is for your Excellency, now on the spot, to investigate and to remove.

My Lord, I dreamt that some such representation as the following was once made, for the purpose of securing an efficacious influence, by raising great abhorrence; and that it was made by the eloquent and artful Ulysses.

“Sir—the interest of the crown, the security of the empire, I may add, the safety of your person, are at stake. I come, in the conviction of my understanding, and the hurry of the heart, to warn you of the danger, and to point out the means of averting it. I have laboured, as I could, in your service, but it is to my country, I wish to transfer the recompence of my literary labours, and my political wanderings. Ireland is the
Ithaca

Ithaca of my wishes, and yet, there, lies my ground of apprehension. Sir, the Catholics have been always the devoted friends, and too often the devoted victims, of royalty. They are now roused from the sleep of ages, by the demon of democracy, by the satanic yell of John Calvin and John Knox. The political pale is broken down, and the Papist and Presbyterian, after wondering at each other, like the visitors and natives of your new-discovered islands, have concluded, from the resemblance of their faces and their hands, that their hearts, and what is more, their interests, must be the same; and are at this instant, beginning to form that nation into a family compact, formidable, as I think, to the sovereignty of your house, and to the integrity of the empire. Sir, for God's sake, for the sake of us all, for your own sake, break up, on the moment, this menacing confraternity, by taking the Catholics to the bosom of your paternal benevolence, and by darting on those infernal societies, the thunderbolt of your speediest vengeance. The personal and religious repulsion of the North and the South, which kept the spirit separate from the mass, being once suspended, that attraction will take place in mind, which in matter you know operates in the ratio of the squares of the distances; and therefore, unless the disruption be made soon, it will soon be too late. Bring the silly

sheep back to *your* fold. Be prominent in your benevolence; and by thus anticipating your parliament, let it appear the work of private mercy, rather than of public justice; and thus gratitude will be secured to your person, ten times more useful than attachment to any abstract estate in the constitution. I hate these abstractions. Take advantage of those old habits, which once inclined, and may still incline *our*—I beg your pardon—I mean *their* minds, to the person of the monarch, and the fortunes of a family, rather than to the political fabric in which they never found a home. Usher them into the constitution, under your own auspices, and with the warm pressure of your own hand. Let one arm encircle this class of my countrymen, but strike—I say, strike with the other.”

Thus it was said.—What was said was too credulously believed; and this strange motly system, so magnanimous and so mean, so public-spirited and pusillanimous, was begun.

The wind changed; light and variable breezes preceeded; but the favourable gale acquired constancy and regularity. While its direction seemed uncertain to those only who were not apprized of the coming change, it was curious to see all the men, who supposed themselves most confidential, exerting all their power, and putting every sort of subaltern influence into motion, to counteract

counteract what had been previously intended ; to *prick on* grand juries and corporations, as much in the secret as themselves, to the ridiculous pledge of their lives and fortunes ; and to raise up in county court-houses, a civil war against the benevolence of the sovereign. To see, for example, a great law Lord throwing aside his wisdom and his wig, calling for his boots and spurs, and driving away on his hack, to be in time for the convention of the county, and their resolutely irresolute resolutions. Might he not have suspected, that there was an *outer* confidence, and another confidence interior and *immediate* ; and that those very people were possessed of the latter, against whom he was inveighing with such vehemence ?

This is, I think, the master-key for all the seeming intricacies of a system, in which one part, the British, was counteracting another, the Irish ; and where the body chiefly interested, was absolutely *forced* to manage so, as not to miss the proffered favours, and at the same time, not forfeit that alliance, which though not the proximate, was the remote cause, and I believe, by them the well-remembered cause of all that they have since attained ; operating, however, in an unexpected manner. "Tout evenement, said Voltaire, en amene un autre, auquel on ne s'attendait pas."

Yes,

Yes, CATHOLICS OF IRELAND!—able negotiators as you no doubt have been, acting as you have done with unity, secrecy, and celerity; you are, at the same time, warm-hearted men. You never will, my countrymen! you never can, follow up that part of the system, which I think has flowed from misrepresentation made, and unfounded suspicion raised, in the breast of the Sovereign. The genius of the Irish nation, as has been eloquently and truly said, is Affection; and now that you are courted by courtiers, and petted by patriots; now that you are about to be taken up from the gate, where you not long since lay neglected, and to be laid, graciously and gratuitously on the bosom of the constitution; now that you are the *petitioned*, rather than the petitioners, you will remember that noble promptitude of spirit, that affectionate alacrity, that high policy of your northern brethern, who disdained the niggardliness of pedententim emancipation, and first said to you, “as you are Men, be Free-men; your claims are in your sufferings; and in your nature, lies your qualification.”—A liberality of intellect that expanded the minds of those who were most expanded before, and by the native intelligence of the people, discovered and put in practice a method of improving Ireland, which had always escaped the partizans on both sides of political question.

You

You well remember, that, *before* the royal will was fully and *clearly* manifested, there was a malignant conspiracy in this country. You know there was a plot, and that you yourselves were most deeply interested, and most seriously implicated in it. It was a conspiracy of intolerance and tyranny, generated from the spirit of monopoly, and the insolence of ascendancy, equally unprincipled and sanguinary, equally ferocious and cunning.

This real conspiracy, established its hopes of success on cherishing and fostering the panic of two other conspiracies: First,—A Catholic plot; and, secondly, when obliged to loosen their hold in that quarter, the suggestion of a Presbyterian or Jacobin plot.

You remember the different methods taken to establish a belief in the former of these two fictitious plots: for many of you have felt them. You remember the attempts first made to revive and inflame hereditary animosities in some of the northern counties; and to raise a war-whoop, first *against* the Presbyterians, under the name of the Scotch; and then, *with* the Presbyterians against the Catholics, as papists and defenders. You remember, how and why the enormities of individuals were ascribed, indiscriminately, to the whole body; and how successful was that logic, equally false and cruel,
which

which reasoned from the excesses committed by some of the dregs of the populace, to the sweeping crimination of the whole religious persuasion; why the religion was fastened on the rogue, that the rogue might communicate an odium on the religion; and why Catholic Committee, Defenders, United Irishmen, National Guards, French Emisseries, with a monstrous tail of et ceteras, were all combined and stitched together, to hold up a scare-crow, which might terrify those that were in, and alarm those that were out of the country.

You remember, that when the higher order of the Catholics addressed the lower, they were said to encourage and instigate; and when silent, they were said still to countenance and connive; while the country gentlemen themselves, for the most part, never seemed so eager to associate for their own protection, as to call in the military, and then carry off some dreadful piece of news to the Castle. You remember the arrangement of secret committees, formed on the model of the central one; the instructions received, and the exclusions in consequence made; the number of subaltern arts employed or connived at; the forged anecdotes; the rumours of strange connexions; the tales of surprising discoveries just about to be unfolded; the encouragement of spies; the processes

cess of *buck-hunting*, as I think it was humanely called; the larger scandal that denounced whole towns, by calling one *a little nest of republicans*, and another the *sink of the nation*; and all this to keep the people *quiet*; by spreading universal terror, alarm, and suspicion; after having harassed, distressed, and dragooned many parts of the country, as if to force it to be faithless to itself, and to look abroad for relief and protection.

You well remember the weekly arrests of decent and industrious men, in the open streets, at their own doors, hurried away, after bail had been refused, under a strong and ostentatious guard, to a common gaol; the ransacking of these gaols for informers, among the vilest and most infamous of men; the suspending of trials for the purpose of keeping up the panic of the day; and at last—the delivery of the mountain; the dismissal of the prisoners, after a confinement of months, their health injured, their property ruined, and the perjury of the informers reprobated, even by the lawyers of the prosecution.

Such was one *part* of the *plot* of the *Protestant Ascendancy*, of which no individual can be accused, so much as that spirit of selfish domination, appertaining to the system itself which I am willing to believe, has perverted excellent understanding, and corrupted excellent hearts.

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When

When obliged to quit its hold in one quarter, it instantly turned upon another.

You well remember how prosecution changed its object, and why it was so changed; why everlasting and unmitigated war was declared against societies for *union*; and why, you yourselves, were prudently anxious to restrain the most forward within the circle of their institution.* You remember why it was, that one of the first commercial towns in the kingdom was put under a sort of military interdict, and very nar-

* The test adopted by most of these societies, will explain to your Lordship the nature and end of their institution,---

"I, A---B, in the presence of God, do pledge myself to my country, that I will use all my abilities and influence, in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will endeavour, as much as lies in my ability, to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of rights, and an union of power, among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which, every reform in Parliament must be partial, not national, inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this country." November 9th, 1791,

Could you have conceived, my Lord, that a young man of the most promising abilities, the most amiable character, and of a very respectable family, has been peremptorily refused admission to the Irish bar, for having subscribed this test? Enquire into the fact.

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rowly escaped a Russian castigation. The ministers of the *outer* confidence, were well acquainted with this *half* of the secret; and all the spleen of the Protestant Ascendency, disappointed in its first object, was poured upon that portion of the Protestants themselves, who had shown the rottenness of that ascendancy, or rather dominancy; and whose unremitting exertions for a reform, had long before excited the enmity of all who live and burrow in the corruption and putrefaction of the constitution.

For the success of systematic and pre-concerted *disunion*, a new tribe of penal laws sprung up, while the old ones were abandoned, the direction varied, the substance the same. Here might be seen, even the advocate for throwing open the gates of the constitution to the Catholics, quietly consenting to put a gag into that mouth of the people, a free press; insisting, perhaps, in one moment, upon the salutary and constitutional awe, which an united people ought to have over Parliament; and, in another, conniving at an act, which crumbled this same people into atoms, and scattered them as dust. Popish plots grew stale; the Presbyterian plot became the order of the day; Jacobin was put in place of Jacobite; and the legislative, judicial, and executive powers, were jumbled together into a singular coalition, against any thing that had the appear-

ance of association. The armed associations were dispersed, not from any real fears, which however were excellently counterfeited, but from the secret dread of the known and experienced desire for a reform, which had always inspired that body, when it consisted principally of Protestants, now reviving and gathering strength, by an intermixture of their Catholic brethren.

Thus was this energetic establishment, arising from the innate vigour of the people; his most efficient system of defence, sealed up and closed, without judgment or foresight, on the irritation of the moment. But may not the time soon, too soon arrive, when the spontaneous effort of the people will again be recurred to; when the safety of the island will be declared by authority to rest, where alone, in times of danger, it *can* rest, on an armed people; and when the Volunteers will be solicited to become a second time, the protectors and guardians of that peace they were supposed about to infringe, and of the very men who have vilified and abused them.

You remember, how and why, any incautious or unguarded expression, dictated in the fervour and emphasis of the heart; any effusion of a mind prone to enthusiasm, (as all good minds are) and wounded to the quick, at seeing the connived-at extinction of an institution, which raised every man politically, as well as naturally, an inch in his

his stature; which had so long supplied a theme for the patriot, and was once, what it may prove again, the salvation of Ireland; how any such expressions were sure to raise a paper from its intrinsic insignificance, and make it a prolific parent for alarm and prosecution.

You remember, that it was the principal aim of this plotting, ministerial, aristocratic ascendancy, to break down all attempts at association of *any* kind, by which means, they not only kept back the union of Irishmen, but by the very same means, prevented any general or national remonstrance against the war.—A war, which, as it is our duty to collect something useful from calamity itself, may be considered as serviceable, indirectly, to this country. It has, in a manner better understood than expressed, promoted the final and full emancipation of the Catholic of Ireland; and I confide in that providence, which works its ends in ways inscrutable, will yet terminate in the advancement and melioration of mankind.

You remember, how all *civil* societies, founded upon union as a *means*, for reform as an *end*, were sure to feel the same arm of unmitigated power, as had been felt by the military associations; supplying a target for the arrows of every one, immediately or remotely interested in the abuses of the constitution; and what undue importance

portance was given to them, designedly, that they might form a subject for a plot *about to be discovered*, a conspiracy *about to be detected*, which might reflect credit on the wonderful activity and vigilance of the administration.

“ Plots were their meat and drink ;

“ Plots did their hearts revive ;

“ And could they but have kept up Plots,

“ They still had been alive.”

In short, you recollect *why* the whole nation was to be considered as a mass of gun-powder ; and that the plan was to divide not only part from part, but particle from particle, least accidental collision, or the *light of the sun*, should happen to make the whole explode in a sudden conflagration.

Finally, you remember, in what manner, and for what reason, the views and actions of your northern friends have been tortured and exaggerated ; and, how, in that part of the kingdom, the reformer, the republican, and the regicide, were confounded, as the catholic and the defender had been in another. But, remembering all this, you, at the same time, manifest, that neither art nor oppression, however severely felt by individuals, have been successful against the honest policy of the people. THE UNION OF IRISH-

PLOT

PLOT OF THE PROTESTANT ASCENDENCY; and WILL SUBSIST, as long as the people have their eyes open to their present interests and eventual happiness.

I now turn to your Excellency, whose head and heart equally disdain the left-handed policy of governing--by a PLOT; but who must at the same time, be sensible, that governing by a party, is neither more nor less than governing by a PLOT.

I beseech you to correct, by self-inspection, the misrepresentations which I fear has been made on the other side of the channel, relative to a part of the Irish people, equal, if not superior in number, to those of the established church. You know, that the general character of men is not so much influenced by the excellency of religion, or so much injured by its abuses, as the mutual crimination of sects has hitherto led us to imagine. You know, that this crimination is generally grounded on surmise and conjecture, or upon a logic, which builds the rule upon the exception, and poisons the judgment by pre-conceived impressions.

Your opinion of the Presbyterians, will not, I am persuaded, be grounded either on that of a Catholic Archbishop or a Protestant one, who, perhaps, just before, has laid a whole community under interdict, as "fools or knaves." You will ascribe such ideas to that sectarian spirit, which
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from motives of interest, as well as ambition, would wish to appropriate the treasury of Heaven. You must feel, that there is a goodness in human nature, an instinctive christianity, an incompressible benevolence, that will not be monopolized for the use of a profession, or the emolument of a craft; but which, like a Heaven-sent fire, consumes creeds and confessions on the altar of HUMANITY. It is the priest who makes the sect, and the man is always better than the religionist.

Hence it was, that in the work of union among Irishmen, the clergy, for the most part, displayed a strenuous inactivity. They neither gave nor followed example; but stood at a fullen and unsocial distance until forced towards each other, with a sort of torpid acquiescence, by the mere impulse of the people. At what time, I ask, would Ireland become *one* people, were the two Archbishops to draw up the terms of communion?

My Lord, the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland have been in a state of meditated persecution. Why?—As I think from their undeviating attachment to a reform, and from their active zeal in promoting an union among all Irishmen. It is the glory of him who addresses you, (most humbly as an individual, most proudly as an Irishman) to belong to a sect, if sect it can be called, which regards no authority on earth, in
matters

matters of religion, save the words and the works of its author; whose fundamental principle it is, that every person has a right, and in proportion to his abilities, is under an *obligation*, to judge for himself in matters of *religion*:— a right subservient to God alone, not a favour to be derived from the gratuitous lenity of government: a right accounted as sacred in others, as in ourselves; and which naturally produces an independence of mind, the buckler of political, as well as personal virtue.

A love of religious and of political liberty are closely allied, and, of consequence, the desire for a reform in the house of the people, has been, for many years past, in the North of this kingdom, not merely a cold principle, but an animating spring of action. They grounded this attachment, not only on their own conviction of the necessity of a reform in a house, where above two hundred members are returned by individuals, forty members by ten persons, and two thirds of the whole by less than one hundred; but upon the concurring opinions of the most splendid orators, the deepest reasoners, the best men; on authorities in other respect the most opposite, on Fox and Pitt, Grattan and Flood, the early principles of Richmond, and the purer practice of Burke; on the petitions of 28 out of 32 counties in Ireland; on the coincidence of every public assembly of the people that has been held for

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years

years past; and lastly, on the recognition of the principle by the House of Commons itself, and their appointment of a committee of reform.

They very generally conceive, that the revolution of 82 was a mere flower of the day; and instead of taking root in the soil, becoming popular and productive, was seconded by the aristocracy of Ireland merely for their own purposes; and has ended entirely in promoting their interest and consequence. *Their* unconstitutional influence has been found as great as ever, and exerted with less control; and all the efforts of the Protestant people, with a voluntary million of money, were expended, to secure to a party in the state a monopoly in the constitution.—Who are the *conspirators*?—Those who have first deflowered the constitution, and afterwards prostitute it for sale.—Who are the *traitors*? Those who have treacherously plotted the disunion of the people—Who are the *incendiaries*? Those who have burned the bill of rights in the very sanctuary of the laws.

Love, my Lord, to be lasting, must always be reciprocal. But' whenever the constitution is corrupted, changed, and won from the people; when it adulterates hourly with the aristocracy; when we see an oligarchy in one house, an aristocracy in another, and the constitutional democracy in neither, it is really not surprising that the parties formerly attached, should be a little out of temper.

Be

Be it your business to reconcile them. Let not the Irish be assimilated to the British constitution only in its abuses. Make the constitution lovely as it was, and it will be beloved. Give us only a sure and certain hope, that those who come into office, do not intend to break that awful responsibility, which certainly binds them, and all must continue well.

You will be told, that the people in the North of Ireland are deeply infected with what are called French principles. My Lord, I do believe them most obstinately attached to the principles of Locke, as put in practice at the revolution. If such principles are falsely, and for a purpose, said to originate from France, they will not, on that account renounce them, as little as they did, when the very same principles of Locke were illustrated in the plains of America. But *times* are changed.—Alas !—’tis very true. Yet what are the times? the sun still makes the seasons, and the earth produces the harvest; but it is the change in men’s dispositions which *unmakes* the times: for truth is ever the same, and rests on the base of its own immutability.

Are you afraid of the progress of republicanism in the North? I am conscious of no truth clearer to my mind than that the longer Reform is protracted, the more Republicanism will be propagated. The surest way of putting the people out of

conceit with the constitution, is, by hearing always of its perfections, and feeling only its abuses, until they come to confound even the excellencies of government, with the errors of its male-administration: My Lord, let me again repeat what demands your most serious attention—*To protract a Reform is to propagate Republicanism.* Act accordingly.

Let me make another remark: Is *this* my Lord, a time to leave any part of the country disinclined to self-defence? ought there to be a moment lost, in making all parts of the island interested in their own preservation? Good God! Can there now be a doubt which part of the alternative ought to be chosen? either the timely wisdom of granting such a reform as will please all the people, or the mad risque of creating an *abandonment* on their part, or even indifference in case of an invasion. Let people say what they will of standing armies established, or of standing armies in disguise, the only insular garrison to be depended upon, at such a season, is the affection of the people. You may, my Lord, if you please, surround the island with such affections, as with a wall of fire, and it is—it is the time to do it. It is said that in France, terror is no longer the order of the day, as they affectedly call it. Let it not continue to be so here. The late trial of the foreign system, so little congenial to our national character,

character, has not been successful. It has driven many *into* republicanism here, without having in France driven one *out* of that system. How much more easy to conciliate all, by shewing a serious attention to a reform in the Commons House of Parliament. If something be not now done, with Lord Fitzwilliam in the vice-royalty, and with Mr. Grattan and Mr. Ponsonby in possession of their present influence, the people of Ireland will *despair*. At what a time!

My Lord, I do firmly believe, that any plan of reform, sincerely put into execution, would do much to please, though not satisfy, the people. Any reform once made, would render every reform afterwards more easy; and when adopted, any plan would tend to perfect itself. It may walk on, as Catholic emancipation did, from gradual to total. Some think a partial reform, a partial evil, but it may as well be considered as a partial good. I trust, however, that the ideas of the gentlemen formerly in opposition, are not contracted but expanded, by coming into office; and that the principle of the Ponsonby bill will be much improved on, for much it was wanted.

It appeared to be dictated by a spirit of penurious and starveling policy. It seemed rather to proceed from a discouraged opposition, wishing to obtain something, rather than to suit a generous

generous administration, desirous to give all. It was at best but a swelling-out of the borough-monger principle, an arbitrary communication of exclusive privileges to particular geographical divisions of the country, which was neither more nor less than carving the constitution into corporations. It was a plan which did commit a violence on the principles of a constitution that is founded on the common consent of the people, in person, or by representative—A plan which petted and cherished portions of the community to interest them in abuses, and to irritate the remainder by invidious comparison; and by attaching the oldest inheritance of the *whole* people, to certain round spots of earth, gave a locality to liberty, most inconsistent with its nature. It was a plan which turned legislators into land measurers, and land-measurers into legislators; extending lines of demarcation, on one side of which privilege was to be heaped up, and on the other side, common right trodden down; paling in, as with pieces of pack-thread, the liberality of the constitution, and circumscribing with brief authority, the principles of Eternal Justice.

The principles of that justice have made me a convert to the *equal* distribution of the elective franchise; nor is it, at a time when this opinion is under a state of persecution, that any man of spirit will scruple to avow his belief, and to publish

lish it, as truth ought ever to be published, without disguise or exaggeration, without presumption and without fear. I do believe then, that the great means of *re-making* man, is to put him, as early as possible, into the quiet possession of all his natural, essential, unalienable rights; which an equal distribution of elective franchise would effect, without revolutionary concussion, without change in the form of government, and without greatly shocking generally received prejudices and customs. I do believe, that the diffused enjoyment of the elective right, can *alone* educate a country, give a proper value to its inhabitants, and without it, there may and there must be parties, but you are to seek for the PEOPLE. It is this right which gives the only permanent security for all others; for personal safety; for the produce of labour; for the use of the common elements.

I do believe, that the proprietary influence, so self-complimented, is inconsistent with the spirit, and has prostituted the virtue of the constitution; that it is, at best, but a mitigated feudality, and, at worst, the connexion of planter and slave. For what is the duty of a constituent? simply to return the man whom, in his conscience, he thinks can best and most ably discharge the trust of a representative. And what is the analysis of proprietary influence? a mutual conspiracy between

tween two classes of people against the intentment of the constitution. The landlord threatens or promises, and the tenant sacrifices his judgment or his conscience, from fear or from gratitude; and thus proprietary influence either robs or steals private judgment, to the injury of common-weal; and opens a public market for the traffic of franchise, which the rich buy, and the poor sell.

I do believe, that until a natural and necessary connexion be proved between private property and public probity, and that an accumulation of the one inevitably implies a proportional increase of the other, proprietary influence must operate anti-constitutionally; and I think the very *fluctuation* natural to property is of itself a proof, how absurd it is, to base the rights of man on a bottom so unstable; and still more so, to draw circles around places, as if to confine or encompass a quality so fugitive, and to seat the genius of the constitution on the revolving wheel of blind and capricious fortune.

I do believe, that to give the mass of property, commercial and landed, the *whole* of the return of members to serve in parliament, is to form the propertied community into one great corporation, whose end it may be to league together and combine against the population of the country. It tends to form all men of rank, fortune, or connexions,

ions, into a political *party*, a large predominating association, whose interest is partial, and which from having been long accustomed to enjoy the whole constituent, as well as representative power, has its scorn and horror naturally excited at the frenzy, folly, and wickedness of those who desire a share in the representation. Even on the supposition that property must be its rule, the mass of property, and the fund of productive taxation, remain in the mass of the people, and remain unrepresented, merely because minutely divided, though, when taken in the total, it so much exceeds all cumulations.

I do believe, that the rights inherent in the nature of man, as man, cannot be extinguished by an acquired, conventional right, such as property; a thing not natural but incidental, which may or may not belong to a man; and which has no necessary connexion with either a good conscience or good understanding. I think when this right lays claim to dominion over the anterior rights of nature, converts persons into things, and men into cattle, the intention of the social institution is defeated, and the country is divided into a number of large domains, in which men are forced often to sell their birth-right for a place of residence or for nourishment; nor can I see a reason why a right, at first so dependent on the will of the community, should have the plenary

sway over the whole community and the land, as it were to subjugate the inhabitants.

I do believe, that the same compact which secures to one part the right to their possessions, ought to secure to another the possession of their rights; and I think the right of the richest extended beyond its limits, is exactly like the right of the strongest, without a corresponding obligation.

I do believe, so far from an equality of suffrage being a complete departure from the fundamental article of the British constitution, that the history, the philosophy, and the best authorities of the constitution, maintain it; and I think with Lord Chatham, when he said, in the energy of justice, that to be taxed without being represented, is contrary to the maxims of the law, and the first principles of the constitution; and with Lord Camden, when he said, that taxation and representation were inseparable; and with Judge Blackstone, when he said, "that every man who is supposed to be a free agent, ought to be in some measure his own governor, and therefore a branch at least of the legislative power should reside *in the whole body* of the people;" and until it does, they have the same reason to complain, as the Americans had lately, on the other side of the atlantic, or as the Catholics had at our doors.

I do believe such to be the vital principle of the constitution; and until the reign of Henry VI.
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and the act of disfranchisement, which then dispossessed persons, and as it were *appropriated* the constitution, its *practice* also was built upon personal representation; and I think, that the consequence of the opposite practice has been, that the majority, not finding their well-being in the constitution, will not feel as lively an interest as they ought, in its preservation: for as property absorbs all legislative right, the great object of the few will be, not merely to become rich, in order to be capable of bribery, but to keep the country poor as a fit subject for venality.

I do believe, that all those whose office it is to study the signs of the times, should most seriously and solemnly meditate on the present state of affairs throughout the world; and the readiest and most effectual means of dispersing the dark and portentous cloud that hangs over these islands as well as the whole horizon of humanity; and I think it base and pusillanimous, as well as ridiculous, to keep up the etiquette of approach, at such a season. The cabin-boy will run up to the admiral on quarter deck, if he sees a fire near the powder room.

I believe Catholic emancipation to be a great, and glorious measure, but I think with Mr. Connolly, when he said in January 1792, "That he would agree in participating with the Catholics the whole constitution, provided they would join

hand in hand, with their Protestant brethren, and lay the axe to the root of corruption. But if the present system of corruption were continued, it would be only making bad worse; throwing new difficulties and new expence in the way of members of parliament, making them give more for their seat, which must be better paid, principal and interest; and thus extending the elective franchise, would be extending the sphere of corruption and the poverty of the country, which pays for all at the last."

Many measures spoken of, are, no doubt, excellent, and must create well founded popularity. Even a bill for partial reform, must be acceptable.—A bill that would remedy the intoxication of the populace, must be necessary in the education of the Irish people. A nation is to be cured of a bad habit, precisely as an individual: by breaking off the habit at once, with a salutary wrench of the mind or the manners.—A bill for the abolishing the Police, would deliver the city from a night mare, that for years past has sat heavily upon it. Your Excellency's munificence will also do much; but still, it is not the charity of individuals, or the munificence of the great, which can make of a populace, a people; of a number, a NATION. Let not the social intercourse of the higher and lower orders in this island, be sustained merely by charity
on

on the one hand, and blessings on the other; but by an adequate equivalent given and received, that might make the poor and rich reciprocally *dependent*; and thus endowing every individual with an *exchangeable value*, must make the happiness of the community depend, not on inadequate and intermitting benevolence, but upon the action and re-action of self-interest, a principle constant and universal. The enjoyment of the elective right, would do more than the combined sagacity of Swift, benevolence of Berkley, and activity of Howard, could effect; it would give adequate value to the people; and to your Excellency's administration terrestrial immortality.

I have now, my Lord, to seek an apology, for the familiarity with which I have ventured to address you. I might, perhaps, have ascribed it to some peculiarity in an Irish atmosphere, that can thus take away from an individual, the sense of his own insignificance; and, even, at this moment, make him think himself on a level with the first man in the kingdom---in the boundless wish of seeing his fellow-creatures happy. I have made but poor claims for attention, in having, without scruple, professed myself an United Irishman, a Protestant Dissenter, and an advocate for Universal Suffrage: yet, a sense of superior obligation impels me to declare, before

fore the face of man, as I do in the sight of God, that I believe an union among Irishmen, the only solid basis of national prosperity; a right of private judgment, the ground of true christianity; and an equalization of the elective franchise, the surest means of averting danger, and appeasing the troublous spirit of the times.

For an attempt to raise that spirit, I have, myself, been accused, tried, and acquitted; and I should deem this circumstance another disadvantage, were I to have addressed a person, who did not know the full virtue of a verdict of acquittal; and the inhumanity, as well as illegality, of that language, which attempts to infuse suspicion and criminality into the exculpating judgment of the country. I remain, as I have done, in the silence of a self-approving conscience, fully satisfied with the simple sincerity of two emphatic words, which I pronounced at the beginning, and which were returned to my ears, at the close of my trial—NOT GUILTY. TRUE.—I was not, I am not; and, if there still be a doubt of my sincerity, all I can do, is to turn with *somewhat* of that disdain which, *should* inspire a generous nature, struck at by calumny, to the God who reads my thoughts in the bottom of my heart; and to the hallowed memory of a virtuous father, to whose gentle and gracious

cious spirit I have been accustomed to look up in every trying situation of life; whose approving smile, I think, I see, whenever I do a good action; and whose imagined frown makes me dread to commit a bad one.

As a professional man, I have only in excuse, to say, that I think the duties of a good physician and a good citizen by no means incompatible; that there are times, when the business of the public is every man's *own* business; and that, while the two other professions are in this country silent, (whether from motives of interest, or ambition, I shall not presume to say) it is not unbecoming a person belonging to one, equally liberal, and the most *untrammelled*, to give an opinion on public affairs, sincerely and *disinterestedly*.

I now pray to God, that your Excellency's administration, beginning auspiciously, may terminate for the happiness of Ireland, which necessarily includes your own glory; and that when that administration ceases, you may retire, calm, and untroubled by one anxious recollection, to the sanctuary of a serene conscience, and to the bosom of domestic felicity.

WILLIAM DRENNAN.

DUBLIN,
January, 1795.

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